



The Certifier

A Newsletter for Environmental Control Certifying Authorities

New York State Takes the Multiple Barrier Approach to Certification

by Teresa M. Boepple, P.E., New York State Department of Health

As you read the title of this article, one of the first questions that may come to mind is, "What is the multiple barrier approach?" For those of you that are heavily involved with the protection of public water, this is a familiar concept to you. For those of you that are unfamiliar with the concept, if I could paint you a picture, the picture would have a series of "barriers" or "safety nets." The picture would also show a person falling through the air, and although the picture would indicate a breach in one of the barriers, there would be other barriers to follow that would always keep the person safe.

An analogous picture could also be painted for New York State's (NYS)

water operator certification program. Our barriers (safety nets) are:

- 1) Training
- 2) On-the-job experience
- 3) Validated examination
- 4) On-site assessment

In theory, if any of the above are breached or compromised, the other barriers will ensure that the applicant for certification has the required knowledge, skills, ability and judgement to operate a water treatment plant and/or distribution system. (For specific NYS details on barriers one through three listed above, visit our website at: www.health.state.ny.us.)

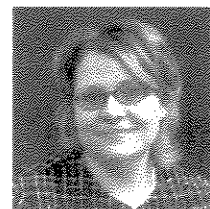
I am not going to go into detail on barriers one through three because most water operator certification program managers are familiar with the February 5, 1999 guidance provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which outlined the program elements for education, on-the-job experience and validated examination (for specific information on the EPA's Operator Certification guidance see www.epa.gov/ogwdw/opcert/opguide.html). NYS's operator certification program follows the EPA's guidance.

What I am going to focus on is the final barrier that is specific to NYS, on-site assessments. Below are the what, why,

who, where, when, and how of on-site assessments.

What is an On-site Assessment (OSA)?

An OSA is an evaluation conducted at a treatment plant or distribution system, which verifies the knowledge, skills, ability and judgement of the operator prior to certification.



Teresa Boepple

Why would a regulator take the time to conduct an OSA?

The benefits!!! These direct and indirect benefits include:

- ◆ **Protection** - Public health is protected by verifying that our first barrier of public health protection, the operator, is in place.
 - ◆ **Developing Cooperative Relationships** - Health Department staff have an opportunity to establish a good working relationship with the new operator.
 - ◆ **Efficiency** - Health Department staff can conduct the sanitary survey during the on-site assessment -
- continued on page 2*

What's Inside...

<i>ABC's 2005 Passing Rates</i>	2
<i>New Partnership to Help Ensure Water Infrastructure Sustainability</i>	3
<i>Call for Nominations</i>	4
<i>Calendar</i>	4

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ABC's 2005 Passing Rates

The chart to the right shows passing rates for ABC's standardized exams given in 2005. Since several standardized exams were updated in 2005, the passing rates in this chart reflect two different versions of the standardized exams.

These rates include all examinees tested by ABC's Certification Program and by clients of the ABC Testing Service who use the standardized exams. Passing rate information for clients who use ABC prescriptive exams is not included.

	Number of Exams	Number Passing	Percent Passing
Water Treatment			
Class I	891	575	65%
Class II	1033	454	44%
Class III	490	178	36%
Class IV	378	92	24%
Distribution			
Class I	1568	1012	65%
Class II	952	629	66%
Class III	252	141	56%
Class IV	240	118	49%
Collection			
Class I	1032	506	49%
Class II	439	279	64%
Class III	183	96	52%
Class IV	133	64	48%
Wastewater Laboratory			
Class I	37	26	70%
Class II	154	77	50%
Class III	8	4	50%
Class IV	41	31	76%
Wastewater Treatment			
Class I	829	521	63%
Class II	1040	488	47%
Class III	805	262	33%
Class IV	527	200	38%
Very Small Water System			
Class I	534	380	71%

New York State Takes Multiple Barrier Approach *continued from page 1*

getting two jobs completed at once!

- ◆ **Consistency** - Provides consistency in the quality of operators certified throughout any State.
- ◆ **Increased quality of water leaving the system.** Decrease in public health hazards. — No more Walkerton-type incidents! (Decrease in MCL violations, Boil Water orders, etc.)
- ◆ **Decreased oversight by State and local government which in turn reduces the time spent in enforcement.**
- ◆ **Decreased time spent on inspection and assessments of water systems for State and local health department.** — Less time spent on sanitary survey reports.
- ◆ **Decreased cost to the system because of optimization.** — Less money spent on chemicals equals savings to the customers.

- ◆ **Increased design life of the system** — Savings to the customers (taxpayers).

Who conducts the OSAs?

Local Health Department staff.

Where is an OSA conducted?

At the operator's water treatment plant and/or distribution system.

When is an OSA conducted?

Prior to the issuance of the initial certification and at the time of renewal (only if the Health Department questions an operator's knowledge, skills, ability and/or judgement).

How is an OSA conducted?

It is conducted much like a sanitary survey where the Health Department staff walk through the facility (source to distribution) with the operator and ask questions regarding protection, treatment, operation, management, monitoring, security, maintenance, exceedance/

emergencies, regulations and reporting.

For NYS, the on-site assessment barrier has served to be one of the most critical barriers in the certification process. This barrier not only ensures that the applicant has the required knowledge, skills and ability, but it also adds a human element that helps to ensure good judgement. As regulators, we need to ensure that our operators have ALL the tools and resources they need to protect public health prior to certification. The on-site assessment barrier provides that extra "safety net" to help us meet these goals.

For more information on NYS's barrier approach and/or for specific information (guidance, forms, training program, etc.) on on-site assessments, please feel free to contact me by phone at (518) 402-7676 or via e-mail at tmb03@health.state.ny.us. ♦

New Partnership to Help Ensure Water Infrastructure Sustainability

from the US EPA Newsroom, www.epa.gov/newsroom/

EPA along with six leading water and wastewater utility organizations announced a statement of intent to ensure the long-term viability of our nation's water systems to promote effective utility management. The formal partnership will focus on improved water and wastewater utility performance through education, management tools and performance measures.

The six trade associations signing this statement of intent are: the Water Environment Federation; National Association of Clean Water Agencies; American Water Works Association; Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies; American Public Works Association; and the National Association of Water Companies.



This statement of intent will facilitate cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and effective communication among the signatory organizations, leading to improved utility management and performance.

Over the next 12 months, EPA and the associations will work with utilities to identify the key attributes of sustainable management. They also will develop measures to use in gauging utility effectiveness, and develop a strategy to promote widespread adoption of sustainable management practices across the water sector. Additional contributions will be solicited through focus group meetings and other communications with individual utilities.

The objectives of this Statement [of Intent] are to:

- Affirm the belief by the Signatory Organizations in the value of sound and effective utility management;
- Strengthen partnerships among the Signatory Organizations and water and wastewater utilities;
- Establish a framework for working together to advance understanding of the principles and practices of effective utility management, and to encourage and promote their wider application;
- Improve utility performance through the utility-specific application of effective management tools, performance measurement and other techniques and systems; and
- Enhance utility decision making through public awareness and customer confidence.

Outreach to utilities is expected to occur throughout this collaboration on the following topics:

- Key attributes of effectively managed utilities;
- Existing utility management resources;
- Resource gaps, barriers, and opportunities to encourage more utilities to manage effectively; and
- Potential measures of success for utilities to gauge progress.

The Signatory Organizations intend to develop a joint strategy to identify, encourage, and recognize excellence in water and wastewater utility management.

The Signatory Organizations intend to communicate widely about this Statement with their constituencies and encourage them to focus increased attention on utility management systems and programs.

For additional information, contact Dale Kemery, (202) 564-4355, kemery.dale@epa.gov.

Call for Nominations

For ABC Board of Directors

Cheryl Bergener, Chair of ABC's Nominating Committee, is currently accepting nominations for the 2007 ABC Board of Directors. The following positions are up for election:

- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Collection Division Director
- Wastewater Treatment Division Director

Only the representatives of Regular Members of the Association are eligible to hold an ABC office. Nominations for the Board of Directors must be in writing and received by the ABC office by June 30, 2006. Nominations forms have been mailed to all Regular Members. Nominations are available on ABC's web site at www.abccert.org. ❖

For ABC Awards

The ABC Awards Committee is accepting nominations for the:

- Harris F. Seidel Award
- Certification Program Award
- Robert C. McAnespie Certification Officer Award

Nominations may be made by the association's members, by members of the association's board of directors, by training and/or certification committees of AWWA and WEF and their local sections or associations, or by similar organizations actively involved in training and/or certification. Nominations shall be in writing and shall describe the nominee's contributions that warrant consideration for the award. Award descriptions and nomination forms are available on ABC's web site at www.abccert.org. Nominations must be received by the ABC office by June 30, 2006 to be considered for the awards. ❖

CALENDAR

June 9, 2006

ABC Executive Committee Meeting
San Antonio, TX

June 10, 2006

ABC Board of Directors Meeting
San Antonio, TX

August 11-12, 2006

ABC Executive Committee
Summer Meeting

October 20, 2006

ABC Executive Committee Meeting
Dallas, TX

October 21, 2006

ABC Board of Directors Meeting
Dallas, TX

January 16, 2007

ABC Executive Committee Meeting
Savannah, GA

January 16-19, 2007

ABC Annual Conference
Savannah, GA

January 20, 2007

ABC Board of Directors Meeting
Savannah, GA

For information on ABC activities, call 515/232-3623, fax 515/232-3778, e-mail abc@abccert.org, or visit our web site at www.abccert.org

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